



Cultivating Success – One Garden at a Time

USADF works with farming cooperatives to improve the quality of farmers' produce, access bank loans, and raise income levels.

Sand kicked into Bukuru Jean's face as he wiped the sweat off his throbbing forehead. The midday sun showed no mercy. But Jean, a vegetable gardener from Benin's coastal town of Ouidah had no time to worry about his own thirst. Watering his garden was all that was on his mind. So he headed towards the nearest water source—two miles away.

In desperate need of an irrigation system and better farming tools, Jean turned to Ouidah's local banks. A 'peasant' in their eyes, the banks refused to even consider granting him a loan.

With his options dwindling, Jean joined a local farming cooperative called L'Union Communale des Producteurs d'Ouidah (UCP). As a new member of this 226-person cooperative, Jean was finally able to access credit, but on a far too limited scale. Jean had bigger dreams than fighting every day to make ends meet. He knew that if he could muster up the enough capital to purchase irrigation and farming equipment, he could cut down labor costs in the long run, sell higher quality produce, and significantly increase his income—improving the lives of his five children.



A farmer tends to his tomato, pepper, and onion garden. USADF is working with a farming cooperative in Benin, to the expand production and quality, increase access to bank loans, and grow income levels.

Jean and UCP came to the United States African Development Foundation (USADF) in January 2009 with a proposal to use a USADF grant to tap into the ever-growing demand for fresh fruit and vegetables in regional markets. The USADF grant (No. 1999) provided UCP with much-needed irrigation equipment, which enabled the farmers to begin growing year-round and to increase, by twice to eight times, the amount of land they had under cultivation.

Almost 40% of USADF's grant paid local African experts to train UCP members in advanced vegetable gardening techniques, in new marketing skills, and in improved business practices. As a result, the farmers gained a much stronger position in selling their products and earned much higher profits.

The purchase of new farming tools also enabled UCP farmers to not only triple their production output but also cut labor costs by half, all without having to take their children out of school to work the fields.

Jean says, “Now I can cover school tuitions for my five children, pay for health care, and afford a better diet for my family.”

USADF’s support and UCP’s hard work convinced the local development bank to loan up to twice the amount of UCP members’ accounts. This huge change in farmers’ access to credit is a positive sign that the project’s success will be continue on well past the grant period.

USADF and farmers, like Jean, work hand-in-hand to alleviate serious economic hardship and improve incomes where the needs are the greatest—one garden at a time.

USADF is an independent United States Government Agency dedicated to helping Africa’s most marginalized and underserved populations. USADF partners with African led and managed groups to address social issues and increase economic growth. To learn more about this grant and other USADF projects, visit www.usadf.gov.